

“I hate the tube.”

It was something Lorna said to herself almost daily. A pessimistic badge of honour of the eight years she'd spent living in one of the biggest cities in the world.

Stood on the southbound platform of the Northern Line at Tottenham Court Road, it wasn't the worst she'd ever seen it. But after a long day chained to her grey desk, in her grey office, nodding politely and smiling at bosses she didn't like – punctuated only by a dry ham and cheese panini eaten at her desk – she'd had enough. She wanted to get home.

It was 5.30pm on a Tuesday – peak hour. The platform was heaving with commuters and tourists, everyone trying to squeeze through non-existent space in the crowd to move along the platform. A large group of Spanish students, laughing and screaming, each fighting to speak louder, louder, louder, were standing right next to the entrance, ignoring the pleas of the platform manager over the loudspeaker to 'move right down the platform' and blocking the flow of human traffic, to the ire of regular commuters.

The collective body heat created a muggy humidity, adding to her irritation and making her eyelids heavy. Her make-up felt sticky on her face, a days oil and dirt all sinking into her pores. She just wanted to get home, wash off the grime of the city and get into her stretchy pyjamas.

She glanced up at the electronic time boards hovering over the commuters, spaced at 10 metre intervals. Two minutes. She closed her eyes and let out a deep sigh. The smell of dirty fumes mixed with the perfume of a stylish young woman to her right and the stale, cold breath of someone she couldn't see, though suspected to be an alcoholic with his own woes and worries, to her left.

Feeling the wind that signaled an oncoming train, she opened her eyes and could see the two headlights approaching, like cats eyes, piercing the darkness of the tunnel. With the tube just seconds from screaming into the platform, Lorna felt herself being shoved forward.

“Hey!”

Panicking, shocked, she pushed her back against the crowd, who were protesting loudly at something, or someone. It all happened so quickly. Before she could turn around, someone grabbed her coat and shoved her violently to the right where she fell to the floor, taking a few other commuters down with her. She looked up at where to direct her anger just in time to see a middle-aged woman, with bright copper hair and a chalky pale face, launch herself off the platform and straight into the oncoming train. Her body exploded onto the windshield, splattering Lorna's face with blood and bone fragments, before her ragged remains were dragged under the small metal wheels which screeched to a deafening halt of crunching bone.